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ABSTRACT

In an intensive English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) program, implementing a sourcebook project affects the design and content of all the courses in a curriculum. Sourcebooks, multimedia collections of materials devoted to a given topic and used in a simulation of academic research, can be adapted for use in independently operated ESL courses as well. Some practical issues to be considered in planning and compiling a workable sourcebook, including the special problem of selecting topics and materials, are discussed. Guidelines and ideas for teaching sourcebook materials and for drawing on the sourcebook resources in classes other than the composition class are given, and suggestions are made for utilizing sourcebooks in independent ESL classes. A sample bibliography for a sourcebook is appended. 23 references. (DJD)

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SOURCEBOOKS IN ESL INSTRUCTION

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SOURCEBOOKS IN ESL INSTRUCTION

ABSTRACT

A sourcebook is a multi-media collection of materials devoted to a given topic and used in a simulation of academic research. From it, composition students select materials for documenting and writing a short research paper on a relevant aspect of the topic. In an intensive ESL program, implementing a sourcebook project affects the design and content of all the courses in the curriculum. Sourcebooks can be adapted for use in independently operated ESL courses as well. This article takes up some practical issues to be considered in planning and compiling a workable sourcebook, including special problems of selecting topics and materials. Also given are guidelines and ideas for teaching sourcebook materials and for drawing on the sourcebook resources in classes other than the composition class. Finally, the discussion turns to some suggestions for utilizing sourcebooks in singly operated ESL classes.

SOURCEBOOKS IN ESL INSTRUCTION

A relatively recent development in ESP/EAP curriculum design is a focus on the role of content in the growth of language skills. This movement has been motivated by the idea that improvement in language skills takes place as a result of expending effort to learn about some subject matter, rather than of deliberately setting out to practice language per se. Current pedagogical wisdom--to some degree borne out by teaching experiments (Peterson, 1985)--holds that increases in language proficiency can be promoted by using language to deal with content in authentic situations.

Interest in content-bearing instruction in language pedagogy stems from a growing understanding of the importance of real-world and background knowledge in language comprehension. Krashen (1981), for example, has promoted "narrow reading" as a means of combining content learning with language learning. His idea is that sustained reading in depth on a single topic is more efficacious in improving reading comprehension than episodic reading on different topics. He believes that gaining familiarity with a topic by prolonged exposure to it greatly facilitates the reading task. In general, his call for "narrow reading" is supported by schema research and psycholinguistics. Studies in both first

language learning (Adams, 1980; Bisantz & Voss, 1981; Goodman, 1979; Smith, 1982; Schank, 1982; Freedle & Carroll, 1972; Rumelhart, 1980) and second language learning (Clarke & Silberstein, 1979; Johnson, 1982; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Coady, 1979) have generally led to the conclusion that linguistic and cognitive structures are complementary components in the process of comprehenion.

One means that has been suggested of introducing content-bearing instruction into the ESL curriculum is through the use of a sourcebook (Ponder and Powell, 1986). The sourcebook itself is a collection of materials on a selected topic drawn from many media. Its immediate use is as a point of departure for writing a research paper in the advanced composition class. The sourcebook "concept" is much broader in scope. Implementing it involves using the sourcebook materials to engender activities in all the other classes of the curriculum as well, without, however, requiring that the regular skills-based syllabus be replaced (Ponder & Powell, 1986). This article deals with problems of compiling and using "homemade" sourcebooks in the ESL curriculum, both in intensive programs and in independently operated courses.

Sourcebooks: History and Rationale

The original sourcebooks of the 1950's and 1960's disappeared because of economic reasons peculiar to the publishing industry, not because they were not useful or

effective. Their disappearance was regretted by many teachers who had used them in undergraduate composition classes. The benefits they brought to the teaching of composition deserve a second look. In many respects, sourcebooks seem ideally suited for adaptation in ESL instruction, particularly as they introduce content learning as a means of enhancing linguistic skills.

A Historical Perspective

Originally, sourcebooks were a publishing innovation in response to the requirements of instruction in undergraduate English courses in American colleges and universities. These one-volume handbooks were composed of selected materials on a single topic and were intended for use as documentary resources in a simulation of academic research. Such a collection enabled the student writer to assemble sufficient information to compose a short term paper on some appropriate aspect of the topic with acceptable documentation and footnotes, in conformance with accepted citation and bibliographic conventions. For several years, review articles about available sourcebooks were published in College Composition and Communication (Kogan, 1962, 1963, 1964; Chatterton, 1967).

Sourcebooks were published over a period of about ten years, ending in the mid-1960's. The cause of their disappearance seems to have been economic, rather than pedagogic (Chatterton, 1967). Indeed, sourcebooks satisfied a

number of real teaching needs. Most obviously, sourcebooks simplified scholarly research for inexperienced student writers. Working with a sourcebook reduced unproductive time in library searches and allowed much closer supervision of all the technical aspects of the term paper. More importantly, utilization of a sourcebook permitted the student writer to concentrate on the act of composing, and in particular, on coming to grips with the special kinds of problems encountered in research writing. These problems involved not only accounting accurately and honestly for cited materials, but also making judgements about and synthesizing ideas from previously published materials, a central concern of academic work. Finally, working from a sourcebook allowed the student to accumulate a store of knowledge about the selected topic. This knowledge, in turn, facilitated the task of gathering and consilidating information from a variety of sources. Pedagogically, the intention was not so much to pass along information about the sourcebook topic, as to encourage the growth of language skills. Sourcebook authors were aware that "the research paper gives the student a chance to do the kind of original thinking that develops new knowledge from recognized facts" (Anderson & Korg, 1958, p. vii).

Sourcebooks in ESL Instruction

The use of the sourcebook brings to the advanced ESL composition class many of the same advantages brought to undergraduate English courses by the original sourcebooks. As

related directly to the term paper project, use of the sourcebook represents considerable savings in time and teaching energies: savings in time, because dealing with a single collection of pre-selected materials results in reduced confusion in collecting information and fewer trips to the library (or none at all); savings in teaching effort, because having materials available simultaneously to both teacher and student makes possible a more purposive instruction about documentation and research. More importantly, the sourcebook is a vehicle for content-bearing instruction. Students who work from the sourcebook accumulate a store of knowledge about the topic. Since this experience is common to an entire group of individuals, writing about the sourcebook materials can itself become a group concern, with important consequences for instruction. Instead of a private transaction between the teacher and the individual student, the term paper becomes much more of a "public" document open to counsel and input from all the members of the group. The act of composition can easily be de-mystified in such an atmosphere, and for some students, this new look at creating texts may make the task of writing acceptably in English a much more feasible undertaking than they had previously thought. In such a give-and-take atmosphere, it becomes plain that composing is an evolutionary process, rather than a rigid, product-oriented task.

The sourcebook is considerably more than an elaborate

project for advanced composition classes, however. It is also a basis for curriculum planning and design. As a multi-media, multi-use collection, the sourcebook can exert a strong influence on the design of all the courses in the ESL curriculum. Each class can generate input to be added to the sourcebook compilation; or conversely, elements of the sourcebook can serve as the basis for creating original materials for use in other classes. In order to continue to parctice specific linguistics skills, many types of proficiency-promoting exercises and activities in regular textooks can be replaced and/or supplemented by equivalent ones developed from sourcebook materials. In this way, students gain knowledge about the subject, but proficiency development continues, also.

The content-bearing advantages of a sourcebook do not signify a change in the primary mission of ESL instruction, namely, to promote growth in language proficiency (in the largest sense possible). ESL programs and courses generally operate within well-defined institutional and practical restraints. Often, the para-adacemic nature of ESL instruction places it in the category of "remedial" or "service" courses which must fulfill an assigned task, (i.e., to aid non-native speakers of English to increase language proficiency). Such limitations affect the flexibility of course offerings and make it difficult to run such classes purely as content classes. Moreover, to do so would place demands on course designers and administrators which could not

be easily met. What criteria, for example would ESL instructors have to fulfill in order to teach a content, rather than an ESL, course devoted to a given topic? And what argument could persuade many students in such courses that the work in a content course outside their field of study was pertinent to their goals and needs?

Properly implemented, the sourcebook "concept" brings into play a curriculum based on content operating alongside the skills-centered curriculum already in place. Thus, content-bearing uses of the sourcebook operate within the regular ESL curriculum without fundamentally changing the curriculum's primary goal of skills development. This principle is applicable to independent ESL courses as well. In this type of course also, it is possible to introduce content through the use of a sourcebook without sacrificing skills development.

Implementing the Sourcebook Concept

Although sourcebooks are no longer available commercially, it is possible to create collections of materials which serve much the same function and have many of the same advantages as the sourcebooks published originally. Creating a sourcebook entails much more, however, than collecting materials on a topic and then using the collection in the advanced composition class to write a research paper.

Implementing the sourcebook "concept" culminates in a series of activities affecting all the courses in the ESL curriculum. Thus, it is necessary to specify how the sourcebook is to be used in different areas of the curriculum and to consider what difficulties may be encountered in carrying out a sourcebook project. Finally, many applications of the sourcebook may be found for ESL courses not operating within an integrated ESL curriculum.

Elements of a Successful Sourcebook

Compiling a sourcebook requires that some thought be given to two main factors: topic selection and choice of materials. In selecting a topic, the feeling and experiences of the teacher play an important role. Moreover, intrinsic characteristics make some topics more suitable than others for sourcebook development. Finally, the materials themselves should be as varied as possible and representative of the diversity of viewpoints on the topic found in the real world.

Topic Selection. Essentially, any topic may serve as the basis for a sourcebook collection. In practice, some de facto strictures are probably imposed by the nature of ESL teaching. Controversial political or idealogical issues, for example, are probably best avoided, as are overtly sexual or religious topics. A topic such as "poverty in America" illustrates another type of problem. While it is entirely appropriate to discuss such a topic as it is brought up incidentally as a part of the normal classroom routine, few

teachers would wish to focus intentionally on this or any other of the major issues in American society. Moreover, focusing in depth on such a serious problem could reinforce the negative feelings of students who might be "bottoming out" in the U-curve pattern of cultural adjustment (Smith, 1955). In the final analysis, however, it is the prerogative of the individual teacher in the classroom to decide what topic he or she is prepared to confront.

Topics in themselves may have intrinsic characteristics which add to, or conversely, detract from their utility as a sourcebook foundation. A example of a generally unsuitable subject area might be the Indian cultures of the American West. Students often express interest in this subject and writing about topics in this field would seem to be particularly relevant to the experience of foreign students. Many of them also are members of cultures, which, like the Indian tribes of the nineteenth century, are confronted with the encroachments of a highly developed technological society. And most students would approach the topic with at least a token knowledge of the peoples and issues involved. After all, almost everyone in the world is familiar with the cowboys and Indians of films about the American frontier. In Dee Brown's Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (1970) almost all the problems and issues which would be of interest in a research paper on the Plains tribes are dramatically presented to the reader on a level which is at once historically accurate and

emotionally involving. Such a work should fit ideally into a sourcebook, perhaps forming the core of the collection. This is not the case, however. For most foreigners (and undoubtedly, for most Americans as well), familiarity with the topic gained beforehand turns out to be entirely too simplistic. The way of life described in Brown's book, the remoteness of the locations described, the worldview which underlies the Indians' accounts of events, even the names of the places and characters--these elements inherent in the topic itself represent considerable obstacles to foreign students. In sum, this subject is too culturally remote from the prior experience of most students and requires a degree of background knowledge which a lively interest alone can not overcome in the short period of time allowed in the curriculum.

An example of a topic which stands in sharp contrast to the seemingly abstruse nature of the Indian topic is ape language. (Broadly defined, this term encompasses the research and discussions revolving around the question of whether and to what extent the non-human primates can acquire human language.) This topic has the advantage of being relevant in an interesting way to the language-learning situation in which students find themselves in an ESL program. Materials on the topic are abundant and easily located through Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature. These range from human interest stories in popular magazines to technical arguments in scientific publications. More interestingly,

however, the topic is, in a sense, self-organized. It divides itself into a series of research projects, each involving a different animal. Because each project revolves so completely around a particular chimpanzee (or gorilla), the animals used in ape-language research quickly become familiar "personalities" with which it is easy to identify no matter what the level of discussion. Thus, it becomes a relatively simple task to follow the chain of reports, discussions, critiques and other writings resulting from a given project. And the researchers in ape language form a relatively tight circle of names which occur repeatedly in the literature. These elements lend unity to the topic and greatly facilitate research and writing. (Appendix A gives a partial bibliography for this topic.)

Materials. Materials available for inclusion in a sourcebook will come from many sources, a circumstance which the sourcebook designer will want to take full advantage of. Conceptually, the choice of materials may be said to vary horizontally and vertically.

Horizontally, materials vary according to the medium through which information is presented. Films, television and radio programs, lectures, field trips, computer simulations, and even personal interviews can be included, depending on the appropriateness of these sources for the topic under study. Almost any means of transmitting information can become contributing elements to a sourcebook.

Vertically, materials present information at varying levels of thoroughness and technicality. Different types of publications, for example, approach a given topic from very different perspectives. A magazine intended for a wide general audience will discuss a topic in terms quite different from those encountered in a scholarly publication aimed at researchers and academics. It is common, for example, for mass circulation publications (Time, Newsweek, Reader's Digest, etc.) to summarize research originally reported in professional journals. In such writing, the lengthy, technical explanations written for trained specialists become "simplified" accounts aimed at the average reader. In addition, fictionalized materials related to the topic are often available, lending what Rosenblatt (1978) refers to as an aesthetic component to the topic. (Books and films about Tarzan, for example, might be used to initiate the ape language topic referred to above.) For almost any topic, a broad range of approaches and viewpoints can be discovered. As far as possible, materials in a sourcebook should reflect this intellectual diversity. If so, it is certain that a range of linguistic and stylistic difficulty will also have been taken into account. The vocabulary and style of the popular press contrast sharply with the corresponding features in the writing of scholarly journals and books. These kinds of differences in materials allow students to approach the topic hierarchically. That is, instead of having to cope straight away with primary sources or complicated treatments

of a topic, students can work their way gradually into an urderstanding of the issues surrounding a topic. They can begin by dealing first with straightforward, popularized presentations of the topic and gradually build to more serious, technical discussions. Allowing for a variety of writing styles and levels of difficulty also takes into account the varying degrees of interest the topic has for different students. Some class members may only wish to explore the topic at a level of general, informed opinion; others may become very enthusiastic about it and take the trouble to pursue it quite seriously. And to some extent, using such a large variety of materials makes it possible to accomodate students of differing levels of proficiency and preparation in the same working group. Whatever the characteristics of the class, the variety of materials in a sourcebook can provide the support needed to successfully bring to fruition a term-paper project for students of quite different levels of ability, interest, and background.

Implications for Instruction

In practice, the research paper cycle of the advanced composition class is probably the only point in the curriculum where the focus is predominately on the sourcebook topic. In other classes, the topic acts as a thematic device upon which to build supplementary activities. This section lays out some ideas about how the sourcebook can be incorporated into the

various classes which usually make up an intensive language program.

Composition Class. In the term-paper component of the class, the sourcebook can itself become the textbook, or it can be used in conjunction with a separate composition textbook, preferably one with a strong section on writing an academic research paper. In any case, the sourcebook will become the basis for instruction and exercises involving all of the technical problems involved in researching and creating a term paper. Answering questions on technical points is greatly facilitated by the one-volume sourcebook collection which all class members have in hand. And because more instructional time is available, it becomes possible to tackle issues which were likely to have been slighted previously. Often, for example, only one formatting style is taught; by using the sourcebook materials, the formatting requirements of several style manuals can be presented and practiced, along with discussions of the conventions followed in particular disciplines.

Even though the sourcebook offers numerous advantages for teaching the technical aspects of research paper writing, it actually brings the greatest benefit to the composition component of the class. Its special advantage is perhaps that it fosters a strong sense of group endeavor, an ideal environment for developing composing skills. Brainstorming and discussion, for example, are facilitated by a common

interest in and knowledge about the topic. In such an atmosphere, the sharing of compositions becomes a natural activity, at once solving the problem of audience (One writes for one's peers.) and of feed-back (One's peers know something about the topic and can, therefore, comment with understanding on shared work.). Shared knowledge about the topic means that ideas for revision are readily available and that the motivation for revising work is itself strengthened.

In real academic writing, there are probably few demands in student writing for genuinely "original" ideas. Rather, students are called on to draw conclusions about what they have read or heard, to bring together ideas from several sources and express them in reports or papers, or to otherwise show in their own words that they have asssimilated information from textbooks or lectures. The sourcebook can become a training ground for this kind of writing. Beginning with simple substitution of words with their synonymns, many techniques for paraphrasing can be investigated and practiced. The techniques mastered in these activities can then be utilized in practicing summarization. Finally, more specific problems of combining ideas and themes from multiple sources can be introduced. In addition, many "small" issues often omitted from composition instruction can be taken up, such as how to incorporate citations into the flow of a text, and how to preserve the tone and attitude of the original author. (An excellent source of ideas for these activities is the text for advanced students by Arnaudet and Barrett (1984)).

Throughout, sentences, paragraphs, and longer excerpts from the materials in the sourcebook provide a ready source of examples and form the basis for exercises. As far as the problem of plagiarism is concerned, the teacher will discover that the type of instruction described here will have given the student writer an active inventory of techniques and procedure to employ in dealing with the texts of other writers, rather than having to resort to copying.

The outcome of the research class should be that students are able to produce a short (8 to 12 pages) research paper based on a very specific problem raised by the sourcebook materials (with some use of supplementary materials at the discretion of the teacher). Their work should display a knowledge of the technical requirements of such writing and demonstrate skill in dealing with information from a variety of sources.

Listening Comprehension Class. At the most advanced level, where the term paper project is usually carried out, practice in note-taking has probably become an important component of the listening class. Thus, the listening comprehension class may be used to introduce new information on the sourcebook topic in the form of practice lectures. It is the logical place in the curriculum for introducing information through non-print media. Films and video tapes on the sourcebook topic are excellent sources, both for new information about the topic and for practice in attending to

lectures. Field trips, guest lectures (given by members of the university faculty recruited by the ESL instructor), and interviews of visiting experts could also be included. Many intensive ESL programs do not include a separate speaking/conversation class at the advanced levels, so the listening class can also afford an opportunity to emphasize oral skills. The ability of foreign students to communicate orally is a growing concern in U.S. universities, especially as the number of foreign teaching assistants increases (Bailey, Pialorsi, & Zukowski/Faust, 1984). Discussions, mock seminars, peer teaching, and oral reports dealing with aspects of the sourcebook topic are activities which foster communicative skills and at the same time contribute to the acquisition of knowledge about the sourcebook topic.

Reading Class. The success of a term paper project based on the use of a sourcebook depends upon reading skills which are already well developed. Instruction in the reading class can further sharpen these skills by judicious utilization of the sourcebook concept. Reading activities based directly on the sourcebook materials can be created fairly easily. Texts, first introduced as in the composition class as components of the sourcebook, can be made the basis for a range of exercises, including many commonly found in reading textbooks. Examples of these include timed readings, reading for main ideas, reading for details, making inferences, and drawing conclusions (critical reading). Cloze exercises and exercises dealing with referential and cohesive

information in texts are also easily constructed using passages from the sourcebook collection. An explicit link between reading and composing can be established by focussing on formal features of texts; rhetorical types, organizational features, and developmental devices can become the focus of special exercises or analysis.

The reading class, like the listening class, may be used to introduce new information on the sourcebook topic, different from that already included in the original collection. It is an ideal opportunity to bring in the latest information and thinking on the topic, as this is reported in newspapers and magazines, for example. In addition, extensive reading assigned as homework can be based on specially selected articles. Another possiblity for extended reading is a fictional supplement chosen expressly to broaden applicability and understanding of the sourcebook topic. (An example cited earlier would be stories about the Tarzan legend introduced to complement articles on ape language.)

Grammar Class. When possible, grammar points covered in the grammar textbook should be illustrated with examples from the sourcebook and with exercises based on sourcebook materials. Even TOEFL-like work can be created. For example, a short passage could be re-written to include some errors. Underlining of the errors along with appropriate distractors simuluates the format of the "Structure and Written Expression" section of the TOEFL. Such an activity not only

counts as preparation for the test, but also indirectly serves to keep the sourcebook topic in mind.

In addition to this fairly traditional work in grammar, the type of writing required in a research paper leads to kinds of activities which are not often found in grammar class. Many of the techniques used in paraphrasing, for example, can be presented as grammar problems, rather than as a part of the composition class. Alternating word forms or changing from active to passive voice are possible activities of this sort. (See Arnaudet & Barrett (1984) for further ideas along these lines.)

Some Obstacles to Implementation

A number of problems may arise in the preliminary stages of a sourcebook project. Such an undertaking demands extensive reading and research, activities to which many teachers cannot devote a lot of time. And preparing a sourcebook requires duplicating equipment and ample paper. (Each student will receive a copy of every article included in the sourcebook.) Inadequate physical facilities or lack of funding for down-to-earth requirements can severely hinder plans for a sourcebook.

Implementing the sourcebook concept in the intensive curriculum demands group participation and cooperation. Even though the sourcebook may be primarily used in the composition class, the preceeding discussion makes it clear that in reality all courses in the curriculum must be drawn into the

project if it is to be fully successful. Problems of coordination and planning among teaching staff and administrators must be solved, both over the long term and on a day-to-day basis. More importantly, the teachers involved must work with an understanding of the motivation behind the sourcebook concept and must be committed to actively developing sourcebook-based materials for their own classes.

Finally, there is a risk that a sourcebook topic will either be unsuitable for a particular group of students or that students will react negatively to the chosen topic. Nothing perhaps can solve this kind of problem. Curriculum planners can only use their experience and imagination to choose topics they believe to be interesting and to present the selected materials in the most dynamic and interesting way possible.

Sourcebooks Outside Intensive Programs

Can the sourcebook concept be made applicable to ESL classes which operate independently of intensive programs? Such classes would include, for example, those which function in a support role for regularly enrolled students in a university, or courses for those who study English part-time.

Overview. Implementing the sourcebook concept in single classes encourages cross-modal instruction: reading in a composition or listening class, speaking and listening in a reading class, composing and reading in an oral development

class. In an intensive program, variety in sourcebook materials is an integral component of the curriculum, in that separate classes are provided to take into account different kinds of input. In independently operated classes, instructional modes must be diversified within the limits of a single course.

Composition Class. The sourcebook concept readily adapts itself to an independent composition class. The same advantages of the one-volume sourcebook apply to teaching research writing in a class of this kind as in a class which is an element of an entire intensive program. In fact, the streamlining of the research routine made possible by using a sourcebook would seem to be an even greater advantage here than in an intensive program where students are devoting all their time to language study. Moreover, use of a sourcebook can go far to encourage the same sense of group cohesiveness and interest among the members of an independent class as in an intensive program class, with similar benefits for composing and processing skills.

Since an independent composition class usually operates without input from other classes, a variety of resources could be and ought to be integrated into the instruction. In an intensive program, complementary courses in the curriculum provide such enrichment. In a self-contained class, films, video tapes, and lectures--activities found in the listening class of an intensive program--can be included in class

activities.

Reading Improvement Class. The sourcebook is an application of Krashen's (1981) "narrow reading" concept, and is thus ideal for use in an independently operated reading class. Even without using the sourcebook as a resource for writing, intensive reading on the same subject matter contributes to the accumulation of a knowledge base. This expanding body of information in turn facilitates the growth of reading competency. The compilation and use of a sourcebook is a relatively simple means of introducing a thematic element into an independent reading class.

Speaking/Conversation Class. As in a composition class, the sense of shared knowledge and experience fostered by the use of a sourcebook can become a strong positive reinforcement for developing communicative skills. Learning together about the same subject matter facilitates the openness and civility demanded for gaining fluency and for effective peer criticism. In addition, the shared knowledge about the topic should facilitate some kinds of simulations: seminars, oral reports and summaries, and peer teaching, for example.

Conclusion

A sourcebook is a means of bringing to ESL instruction an interesting and fruitful fusion of skills and content. A sourcebook is a "source" of instruction, both for content and for skill-building. With proper planning and implementation,

sourcebook-centered activities provide students with a constantly expanding familiarity with a topic, thus facilitating efforts to focus on further refinement of language skills. At the same time, enhanced language skills make it easier to deal with sourcebook materials. Emphasis on content within a skill-building curriculum constitutes a "double curriculum" which can bring renewed energy and results to the language-learning task, both for students and for educators.

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APPENDIX

Sample Bibliography for a Sourcebook

(on the topic "Ape Language")

This bibliography illustrates the two dimensions--horizontal (variety of media) and vertical (variety of technicality and register)--which can be tapped in compiling a sourcebook for a particular topic.

Scholarly Journals

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AUTHOR NOTES

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